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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 009215

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING DISCUSSES PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP AND
ISLAMISTS WITH CODEL ACKERMAN

REF: AMMAN 9152

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) King Abdullah endorsed Abu Mazen and dismissed Qaddoumi as an "eccentric" during a meeting with CODEL Ackerman November 11. The King was concerned about Islamist political activity in Jordan and said that it was time for moderate Muslims world-wide to be more vocal in denouncing violence. He emphasized Jordan's support for a right of return, but only to a Palestinian state. End Summary.

After Arafat

2. (C) King Abdullah told CODEL Ackerman November 11 that he looked forward to working with new, responsible leadership in the West Bank and Gaza in the wake of Arafat's death. The King said that he had spoken to POTUS and endorsed Abu Mazen as a "good man." He elaborated that Abu Mazen has always been a moderate who opposed the violent intifada. In contrast, he characterized Qaddoumi as an "eccentric" beholden to Syria. The King felt that Abu Mazen's success would depend on the amount of authority he was given, the support he received from outside, and Israel's attitude. While the King saw Abu Mazen as someone the Israelis could talk to, he also saw him as a transitional figure -- with Marwan Barghouti possibly emerging in the long-run as the Palestinians' choice.

Opposing Radical Islam

3. (C) In response to Ackerman's congratulations on the "Amman Message" (reftel) promoting peaceful Islam, the King emphasized that it was time for moderate Muslims to be more proactive and vocal in denouncing violence. He stated that the Amman Message was just the beginning of his efforts to reach out to the "silent majority" of Muslims who reject extremism. He hoped it would lead to fatwas condemning violence. The King explained that the intended audience of the message included Muslims in the U.S., Europe, and Asia in order to counter revolutionary Salafism everywhere.

Islamists in Jordan

4. (C) King Abdullah termed the Islamist opposition in Jordan "a nuisance," but said that it could develop into a real problem if not addressed quickly. He was fighting a tendency within the government to be complacent and conflict averse by getting GOJ officials to "tighten the screws" on political Islamists. At the same time, the King wanted the government to develop better means to engage and assist needy Jordanians (such as a recent visit by Prime Minister al-Fayez to the poor) to off-set the Muslim Brotherhood's charitable, NGO, and medical care network.

Right of Return

5. (C) Asked to comment about the Palestinian argument for a right of return, the King stated that when a two-state solution was reached, Jordanian-Palestinians would be welcome to stay in Jordan (if they held valid residency/identification cards) or move to an independent Palestine. He emphasized that Jordan supported a right of return only to a Palestinian state (i.e., not to Israel).

6. (U) CODEL Ackerman did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE